

**Remarks of Dorcas Hardy
Chairman, WHCoA Policy Committee
Closing Plenary Luncheon
Wednesday, December 14, 2005**

I would like to thank the Oneida Nation Color Guard for coming from Green Bay, Wisconsin to be here today, and Governor Garcia for leading us in the pledge of allegiance and providing us with a blessing as the 2005 White House Conference on Aging comes to a close.

I would like to recognize all the delegates from tribes and tribal organizations across the nation who have joined us for the 2005 WHCoA. Thank you for your continuing contributions to this country and to this Conference.

I would like to acknowledge the generous sponsor of today's lunch – Pfizer Pharmaceuticals -- and in particular Karen Katen, Vice Chairman of Pfizer, Inc and President of Pfizer Human Health.

Unfortunately, Karen has asked that I send her regrets that she could not be with us today and her warmest regards for a successful Conference.

Welcome to the closing event of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging - the Healthy Heart Luncheon! I see lots of red out there which reflects our collective support for the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign. Thank you for supporting this important cause.

As many of you know, the American Heart Association has launched a national campaign to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease, which is the number one killer of U.S. women, claiming about 500,000 women's lives a year.

I hope you have received your pin that is at your place --- generously donated by the American Heart Association – please wear it as a reminder of the urgent need to fight this life-threatening disease.

-- And while this campaign is focused on women -- we know that for all – men, women, young people, baby boomers and older persons – heart disease CAN BE PREVENTED by embarking on a healthy lifestyle -- it is never too late to start.

It is now my personal privilege to introduce the man who knows a lot about prevention and the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle.

Dr. Robert H. Eckel began his tenure as President of the American Heart Association this past July.

Prior to this appointment, Bob served as an American Heart Association volunteer for more than 20 years.

He currently is a Professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine where he holds an endowed Chair in Atherosclerosis. He also has a joint appointment in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Colorado State University and is renowned for his research into nutrition, health and obesity.

Bob and I share a passion for obesity prevention and a serious concern about the health and economic tolls it is taking on our nation. Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

I am so pleased that Bob has agreed to join us today and to spend some time talking about the American Heart Association's work. Ladies and Gentlemen, Dr. Bob Eckel.

{Eckel speaks and shows PSA}

Thank you Dr. Eckel.

(lunch is served)

**Introductory Remarks for Robert N. Butler, MD
President and CEO of the International Longevity Center- USA**

This afternoon I am very pleased to introduce someone who really needs no introduction – Dr. Robert Butler, Professor of Geriatrics at Mount Sinai Medical Center, President and CEO of the International Longevity Center – USA.

In 1975, he became the founding director of the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health, and in 1982, he established the first department of geriatrics in a U.S. medical school.

Dr. Butler's extensive research on healthy aging has resulted in a different vision of aging – bringing our attention to ways in which we can live not only longer, but more productively and successfully.

As the Chair of the Advisory Committee for the 1995 White House Conference on Aging, Dr. Butler is a veteran of White House Conferences, more importantly, he is a friend – and he has a passion for aging issues and their solutions! Today he will speak to us about the importance of productive and successful aging.

Thank you, Dr. Butler, for your inspiring words. We recognize the leadership you have provided to our country over the past many decades and the unwavering commitment you continue to demonstrate to the future and betterment of aging throughout the world

I know I speak for everyone here today when I say you continue to have our deepest respect and admiration.

Now, I am delighted to introduce you to some exceptional folks who are gracing us with their gift of music as we near the conclusion of the Conference.

We are so pleased to have the Singing Seniors Chorale and their director and accompanist, Dr. Jeanne Kelly of the Levine School of Music with us this afternoon.

I know they have a busy schedule during the holiday season – and are appearing at the Kennedy Center tomorrow so this is a real treat for us. Ladies and Gentlemen, The Singing Seniors, and their director Jeanne Kelly.

CLOSING

{To the delegates:} Well, we made it!

And what an incredible four days it has been. It is a major milestone on a journey that for many of us started many months ago and, for some, even years.

I'd like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Policy Committee, Advisory Committee and the WHCoA staff who made this Conference possible.

I congratulate all the delegates for making it this far, and for the heartfelt efforts you have made over the past 3 days.

Personally, I have witnessed great enthusiasm, good humor, and endless energy throughout the Conference as the democratic process played out in rooms all over the hotel.

I have seen people eloquently and sometimes passionately share their thoughts and ideas. I have seen diverse opinions expressed and consensus achieved.

The 50 resolutions that YOU voted on – and the corresponding implementation strategies -- are representative of the everyday issues and challenges that impact each of us – or will - in our homes, our communities, our cities, states and across our country.

Those issues – whether it’s the best way to care for a family member -- to how we will spend and finance the next third of our lives – or deciding to start today to live a healthier life – these are issues that shape our values as individuals and as Americans. And they are all about the future.

It is important, however, that we remember and honor the past.

While we baby boomers may think we have cornered the market on what is “new and exciting,” these issues we have discussed this week have been with us since our country was much, much younger -- and frankly, so were we.

We know we are not the first generation to grow old.

The issues that impact our aging have just become more evident and dramatic as our numbers swell, and we begin to enter another phase of our lives -- which can be exciting and frightening all at the same time.

But we know we are not alone.

Those of you here today who are part of that “Greatest Generation” -- which includes my mother and late father -- have led us to where we are today with fortitude, personal sacrifice and an enduring sense of history. You still have much to teach us, and we are not too old to learn.

Several of us on the Policy Committee had a chance to be in San Antonio in late September for our final Solutions Forum which focused on civic engagement and disaster preparedness – timely issues in light of our recent natural disasters throughout the country and the world.

In keeping with our mandate to focus on the aging of today AND tomorrow, most of the excellent presentations in San Antonio were about baby boomers this and baby boomers that.

At some point (and I hope she will forgive me for borrowing her line) Texas Delegate Chris Kycker rose and spoke in eloquent detail -- listing with pride the many contributions of the Greatest Generation -- a generation to which she, and many of you here, belong.

She concluded by pointing out the Greatest Generation must truly be great -- because its absolute greatest contribution is none other than the much celebrated 78 million baby boomers!! So for that, we thank you as well!

As I look out today, I see luminaries in the fields of aging and health and veterans of past WHCoA’s. I see representatives of business and industry for whom this Conference has been a unique and enlightening experience,

I see members of faith-based organizations, non-profit, for profit organizations, representatives of technology organizations, members of federal, state, local and tribal governments, and I see great diversity. I see members of the media who are veteran “aging reporters” or ones who just dipping their toes into the pool called aging. I see young people who have their whole future ahead of them -- and who, by the way folks, are taking notes.

But mostly, I see people who care deeply about the future of our country who came here this week from every corner of America to try to make a difference for future generations.

Please know that your work is not yet over.

When the fifth White House Conference in history ends in a few minutes, your job as delegates becomes even more important. You are the leaders of the grass roots of this Nation. You are the GRASSTOPS!!

When you go home, I ask that you continue to work to help make the resolutions and the action plans you developed reality.

Whether it’s working with advocates to develop the foundation for a national long term care strategy, expanding the geriatric workforce, speaking to employers about retraining of workers, tossing that last pack of cigarettes or sugared donut in the trash, or signing up to volunteer in your community..... these are real tangible outcomes of this Conference that will signal our ultimate success – as a group and as individuals.

I want to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the following:

- 1) The volunteers – 200 plus strong who came from every corner of the country to help with this WHCoA**
- 2) Susan Davis International – our logistics firm without whom this Conference would not have been possible**
- 3) Last but not least, the staff of the WHCoA – Executive Director Scott Nystrom and all those who have come from Federal agencies and the private sector to make this journey with us.**

Over the past few weeks, I have been asked many times about the significance of THIS White House Conference on Aging.

I have thought about that answer quite a bit over the past several days. The significance is you – the delegates.

Whether you were selected as a delegate by your Governor, your Member of Congress, the National Congress of American Indians or the Policy Committee, you

have given of your time and energy to help our country prepare for the future at a time when your help is needed the most.

That is what America is all about. You have envisioned the future, and you have done so with courage, innovation and integrity.

I know that your families and communities and businesses are proud of the role you have played here this week and the importance you have placed on your responsibilities as delegates. We are proud of you, too.

If nothing else, I ask you to remember: We know there are Blue States and Red States in this Great Nation. But the issues of our future and the aging of America are Purple.

You are the Grasstops! Use your energy and passion to make a difference.

You have honored us with your presence. Let us go forth and continue to envision the future -- for ourselves -- for our families -- and for our country. Thank you.

The 2005 White House Conference on Aging stands adjourned.